*Anderson, Gabrielle, Whipple, Angela & Jimerson, Shane*  Grade Retention: Achievement and Mental Health Outcomes; Center for Development and Learning: <http://www.cdl.org/resource-library/articles/grade_retention.php>

**Summary**

Research over the past century (1911-1999) concludes that evidence does not support the use of retention in the goal of increasing student achievement or social and emotional development. Not only does retention, according to the studies, not enhance student achievement but in reality actually yielded negative effects in math, reading, language and social-emotional adjustments (Jimerson, 2001). Research also fails to find significant differences between groups of students (Kindergarten-3rd and 4th-8th). It is very interesting that across studies, at any grade level, retention is associated with later high school dropout, as well as other negative effects.

The threat of retention is not clear if it actually motivates students to achieve at higher levels. However, this threat may actually increase students’ stress levels in regard to their academic achievement. The increased emphasis on achievement and test scores rather than putting the emphasis on learning may actually backfire in the goal of improved achievement.

The article continues to explain why retention is a failed intervention. Retention does not provide for interventions that address the academic or emotional deficient that may be inhibiting the progress of students. There is also a failure to address the risk failures associated with retention. Retention fails to address the real issues and assumes that repetition will “fix” the problem. Another issue is that retained children are usually older than other children in the same grade. This can cause issues with peers especially during puberty.

The alternative to retention is providing a systematic approach to determining needs of individual students and providing research-based interventions while progress-monitoring the growth and achievement. This allows students to catch-up with their peers while still at grade level.

**Reflection:**

I choose this article since in our country today and most recently in Iowa there seems to be a lot of discussion about students achieving at high levels and retaining those students who are not meeting minimum requirements. This article addresses the research behind retention and the social and mental stresses that retention places on students.

As I was reading the alternative approach to retention I immediately thought of Response to Intervention even though the authors of the article didn’t mention this framework. The process of providing research-based interventions to meet the needs of all students is Response to Intervention. Personally, I believe, based on the research and my own observations, that RtI should be the focus of helping all students achieve at high levels. Our emphasis should be on determining needs, providing appropriate instruction and monitoring student progress. I am not convinced that having students repeat a grade with the same instruction will not produce different results.